



## **United States Mission to the OSCE**

# **Ongoing Violations of OSCE Principles and Commitments by the Russian Federation and the Situation in Ukraine**

As delivered by Ambassador Daniel B. Baer  
to the Permanent Council, Vienna  
May 22, 2014

Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Mr. Chairman, for over eighty days, we have not lost sight of Russia's flagrant and ongoing violation of Ukraine's sovereignty and territorial integrity. Russia's continued disregard for its OSCE commitments and international law, and its impact on Ukraine, were made clear earlier this week in an informal meeting the Chairmanship hosted with UN Assistant Secretary General Simonovic and the representatives and heads of OSCE institutions. Pro-Russia separatists, with outside funding, participation, and support, are engaging in widespread abuse of human rights, and persons who are or are perceived to be pro-Maidan, or pro-Ukraine are the most frequent victims of violence and intimidation.

Mr. Chair, it is also clear that Russia and pro-Russia militants are distorting the truth as they seek to destabilize portions of eastern Ukraine, in advance of the critical presidential election. Pro-Russia militants have seized and shut down radio stations, television broadcasting, internet sites, and newspapers, and have threatened cable and satellite providers. Russia continues its unusual troop movements along the Ukrainian border and continues to support armed groups operating on Ukrainian territory. We noted Mr. Putin's reported order for troops to return back to their original garrisons this week. As of the latest information we have seen some activity, but we have not yet seen conclusive evidence of such a withdrawal. While we certainly hope that the troops will return back to their original garrisons, we note that Russia did not follow through on similar announcements of withdrawals in the past.

In addition, we note with concern reports that late last night, at least three cargo trucks attempted to illegally cross from Russia into Ukraine near Uralo-Kavkaz in Luhansk. Moreover, offensive attacks on Ukrainian armed forces appear to have been conducted with unusually heavy weaponry. We call on the Russian Federation in particular to condemn vocally these attacks and to take actions to de-escalate. As Chancellor Merkel and President Obama made clear, Russian actions that disrupt Ukrainians' exercise of their right to vote will result in further sanctions.

Since Russia's illegal intervention in Crimea, the catalogue of human rights abuses committed in Crimea, including the murder, beatings, and kidnappings of Crimean Tartars, grows longer each week. We note that on May 18, the Crimean Tatars marked the 70th anniversary of their deportation by the Soviet Red Army. We are concerned about the attempt to ban gatherings during the anniversary weekend. Flying military helicopters over the gathering also demonstrated a deplorable attempt to intimidate the community and disrupt the event.

We applaud the launching of a series of national unity dialogue roundtables held in Kyiv, Kharkiv and Mykolaiv. The events allowed for real dialogue between Ukrainians of different viewpoints, sometimes heated dialogue, with hundreds of participants from across Ukrainian society, including many parliamentarians and leaders from eastern oblasts, who discussed a range of issues and concerns. We commend this initiation of dialogue and the universal rejection of violence.

We also welcome the Rada's adoption of the Memorandum of Peace and Concord, in which multiple parties, including opposition parties, with overwhelming support underscored a shared commitment to unity.

We condemn the unlawful detention of journalists. We note that pro-Russia militants in eastern Ukraine have abducted many journalists in recent weeks and continue to hold several, including one in Slovyansk who has been detained for a month. We have seen reports that Ukrainian police detained a British reporter near Mariupol, who was later released, according to his Twitter feed, and also reports that Ukrainian security services detained several individuals in possession of fake journalist credentials issued by the non-existent "Donetsk People's Republic," who were also reportedly carrying MANPADS in the trunk of their car at the time of their detention. We call on Ukrainian authorities to investigate these incidents, and to release these people if they are journalists not involved in illegal activities. Similarly, we have received reports that a television crew from the official, state-sponsored channel Russia Today's Arabic service was denied entry into Ukraine. We call upon the Government of Ukraine to permit full access for journalists, including the issuance of visas where required.

Mr. Chair, as the focus of the international community remains on Ukraine, particularly as it prepares for the presidential election this weekend, the world does not fail to notice Russia's destabilizing actions and its breach of OSCE commitments. In the face of Russian lawlessness, the United States will continue to stand by the people of Ukraine as they seek to build a peaceful, united, and democratic future.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.